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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. EDMUND RUSSELL.

BY WILLIAM R. BRADSHAW.



THE large reception-room in which Mrs. Russell receives her visitors in her house in New York, has its windows half blinded up with heavy hangings. The light enters from one side of a large bay window which throws Rembrandt-like shadows in the interior of the apartment. The other end of the room is lighted by gas. A distant shadowy corner is filled with a large Japanese folding screen. On the mantel is a framed photograph, of Mr. and Mrs. Russell, made by the great artist-photographer, Vanderweyde, of London. This photograph, produced in various sizes, is the trade mark of Mr. and Mrs. Russell, Art Lecturers on Health, Personality, Beauty, Dress and House Decoration. Scattered around the room are various oil paintings executed by Mr. Russell himself, one of these being a study of Mrs. Russell in a veil and bonnet, which is a work of art. The subject of another painting is entitled "The Souls of the Roses," in oil colors, the flowers being limned in a dim and ghostly style upon the canvas. Thrown upon the backs of chairs in artistic confusion are aesthetic gowns, combined of soft-hued plushes with still softer hued silks, many of the fabrics being designed by the Associated Artists of New York, which are worn by Mrs. Russell, and intended to teach by example the value of rich, harmonious colorings, as well as individualism in dress.

It is a satisfaction to Mrs. Russell to know that a company of artists such as these are producing decorative fabrics for Art's sake, and not merely because they will sell. The manufacturers of such fabrics invariably make things that will sell, irrespective of their art quality. But the Associated Artists are working for fame, and not primarily for cash, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their courage in making a stand against the rapacity of commercialism that threatens to extirpate the art instinct of the nation.

Reclining upon a sofa of large dimensions, and sustained by an array of soft silk cushions, sat the high priestess of the most aesthetic cults of London, the fair exponent of the Delsartean principles of beauty of color, form, and gesture, the concentrated embodiment of the aesthetic ideas of William Morris, Burne Jones, Rossetti and the other pre-Raphaelite artists of London. Mrs. Russell is a handsome brunette, about medium height, with a willowy physique, and finely cut, intellectual features. She was arrayed in a singular looking gown of ruby velvet, with an inner vest and petticoat of a dull orange-hued silk, the long mediaeval sleeves being of the same stuff. The fashion of the gown seemed

a compound of Greek and Japanese female attire, but in truth, it resembled neither of these styles in any one particular, as it was thoroughly individual, both in form and color.

The conversation at first reverted to Delsartism, and the necessity for improvement in individual expression and beauty, not only in personal affairs, but also in one's environment.

"Although I am a native of New York State," said Mrs. Russell, in reply to a question, "I am really a Cosmopolite. I belong not to the London of Englishmen, but to the Cosmopolitan circles of that vast city, which is at once the commercial and social capital of the world. At a very early age I conceived the idea that something was radically wrong in our methods of personal bearing and the expression of our feelings and intentions; that something was wrong in the ordinary methods of dressing and attire in general as well as the fact that the most monstrous crimes against the laws of beauty were being carried out in the matter of house decoration and home adornment. I determined to go right to the fountain head of art decoration and education, and immediately went to Paris to study under Delsarte the younger, the elder Delsarte having died some few years before."

"Might I ask," I inquired, "if Delsarte ever published a book in explanation of the principles of natural expression taught by him?"

"He did not," said Mrs. Russell, "his teaching was entirely oral, and has become traditional. He believed in teaching to the fullest extent, the principles of his art, because, as you know, the moment any good thing gets formulated into a decalogue of so many words, good-bye to all good results, because people are more interested in the letter of the law than they are in the spirit thereof. Delsarte was one of the grandest of men, and had made a life long study of the art of expressing any thought or emotion of the human mind in a fitting gesture. I one day saw one of his private note books wherein he had tabulated no less than seven hundred

and twenty-nine different expressions of the eye. This will show you how exhaustively he studied the subject of artistic expressions."

"In your teaching do you first inform your pupils what the principles of expression are, or do you get to work right off and ask them to imitate your own gestures?"

"When I begin with a pupil," said she "I first ask her to imitate this gesture."

Here Mrs. Russell raised her right arm and, extending the forearm, wrist, hand and fingers, made a most poetic movement.

"I find," she continued, "that the pupil fails to repeat the grace of movement I have made. I then say to the pupil 'conceive an idea of your own and try to express it by a gesture.' The result is failure, and why? Because the body has not been taught to obey the mind, it has not been taught artistic expression. I then analyse the gesture and teach the principle involved in it. As soon as the pupil is able to make the gesture, I get her to repeat it at least a thousand times until the mind has complete control of the muscles."



MR. AND MRS. EDMUND RUSSELL.

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The fair speaker emphasised her remarks from time to time with the finest gestures. Every pose of the body was really the dream of an artist. Sometimes she made in the air a beautifully curved line with the hand to represent a vase with elongated curves, such as is seen in the shape of a Persian jar.

"Let us change the subject" said I, "to that of the expression of beauty in the environment of the individual, rather than in the individual himself. Now how do you make connection between your Delsartean principles of expression in the individual and their realization in house decoration?"

"Why," said she, "the connection is most natural between the expression of beauty in one's figure and its expression in one's household belongings. You see the three Delsartean laws of expression are Opposition, as shown in the picture of 'The Angelus' where the girl raises her clasped hands upon her breast, and in the same instant bows her head in the attitude of prayer. Then there is the law of Succession, which you see in making a gesture with the arm, and then extend the lower arm. I first raise the upper arm, and then extend the lower arm, and then throw out the wrist and hand, and finally extend the finger joints one after the other. That is a gesture formed by a series of individual gestures in regular succession. The third great law is Parallelism, which is shown when a gentleman, in raising his hat to a lady, bows with the head and hand at the same time. Now, how do these three laws control the question of decoration? They control it in this way. In decoration Parallelism produces the greatest beauty in line; Opposition gives greatest effect of light and shade, and Succession (gradation) gives greatest possible variety and beauty of coloring. In all apartments we have examples of parallelism in the lines of doors and panels, the lines of the cornice mouldings and the border in the ceiling. All decoration is line, light, shade and color."

"Now," she continued, "A closer investigation of these three principles will show that in each principle is repeated the three Delsartean laws. For example, in line we have the Parallelism of parallel lines, the Opposition of lines at right angles to each other, and the radiation of lines from a common centre, as for example, the ceiling lines in the ceiling of a bay window, or a circular panel in the ceiling. Now, take light and shade, in which we have the contrast of light and darkness. In this picture here of 'The Madonna,' you see that Perugino has introduced contrast between the darkness of her robe and the light background. If you will examine the face you will see that gradation is introduced giving spirituality, sentiment, soul power. Again, in the likeness of the background with certain light regions in the face and clothing, we have repetition of tone, or Parallelism. Now, as to color, we have Succession in the gradation of tones of single colors, self tones, as they are called, that produce the simultaneous contrast. For pure contrast we have the bold and vigorous juxtaposition of different colors, as yellow with blue; red with green, and so on, and for Parallelism you may have observed an apartment with a deep red carpet and deep red walls. There, as you may see, both floor and walls possess that same identical color, which is Parallelism. Now the principles of the application of color range from the one extreme of pure and powerful contrast, through the intermediate zones of gradation to mere parallelism, or likeness at the other extreme of this decorative range of prismatic hues."

"You have founded your studies," said I, "on correct principles, but how do you propose to carry out such laws of decoration in the adornment of the home?"

"The first subject a person wants to know," replied she, as she settled herself down on the pillows, "is what color he will have his house painted. I once lived in the country, and I remember all the houses in the vicinity were painted white with green blinds. The white was a fierce, uncompromising white, and the green was equally independent. Between the house and its blinds there was no sympathy, no compromise, no likeness. There was only the barbaric contrast of early art. You know in early ages that barbarians decorated their buildings or palaces with a streak of red, then a streak of yellow, then a streak of blue. All savages love bright colors, so does the undeveloped eye of a child, but as we grow older we learn to appreciate the gradations and blendings of many tints. The eye requires a more complex treatment, and delights in half tones of color. My father's house was peculiar in this respect; that it was not only painted white, but it had white blinds, also. I do not recollect having seen another house like it, with the blinds painted white."

"Being in the country a few days ago, riding in a sleigh, I came upon a pretty scene. It was that of a white house on a hill top, covered with snow, thrown against the gray sky.

Around the house stood trees with snow on their branches. It was a poem, a symphony in white: and yet, each particular object was of a different tint of white from the others. This was the secret of its beauty. There was Parallelism in the tones of color, which, as I have said, is one of the great laws in color decoration. A room decorated in many self tones of the same color cannot fail to be beautiful. Oscar Wilde's dining-room is in white; the walls are in one shade of white, the draperies are in tones of white, and the floor is covered with white China matting. The delicate gradations of white make a charming *ensemble*. Oscar's own particular sanctum is in vermillion. I think myself, an orange room on the north side of the house is better than either the red or white room. The harmonic gradations of many colors is like a strain of music. If we play a tone in one or two notes only, it is too simple for our complex brains. We require to play not only the father and mother, with the child between, but we want the whole orchestra of uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces and the neighbors to help us."

"Here is a rug," she continued, rising to her feet and producing the article referred to, "with Roman stripes in red on an indigo blue ground. You see the violent contrast indicates a low grade of harmony. The great secret of decorating a room in contrasting colors is to select one particular hue as the highest color. Say, for instance, you selected yellow, yellow on the walls. Every other color introduced into the apartment should contain a certain proportion of yellow. For example, we may have turquoise green draperies on the wall, and why? Because turquoise green is blue, a contrasting color, mixed with a very large proportion of yellow, the color of the walls."

"Suppose," I interrupted, "you were decorating a room in self tones of that color, without introducing any contrasting tint, how would you proceed?"

"Well, in decorating a yellow room," she replied, "there is one thing I would insist, and that is an Oriental carpet to begin with. You see its polychromatic tints so interblend with each other as to produce a rich neutral harmony. Now, I would have the woodwork, doors and trimmings of mahogany. I would then take my yellow and mix it with varying quantities of red, and so get an infinite number of orange yellow tones, and with these tones I would paint my walls, frieze, cornice and ceiling. Then I would clothe my chairs and settees with a yellow far from the primary color. My draperies would be of a dull orange hue. To relieve the monotony of the all prevailing yellow tones, I would introduce a few vases or other small objects of a greenish-blue tint, as sharp points of contrasting color. In all cases, the idea is to make the room subordinate to the people who live in it. Primary colors should be greatly reduced in tone when employed in furniture as backgrounds to the furniture and the people in the room."

"What do you think," said I, "of the practice of having Red rooms, Blue rooms, Amber rooms, etc.?"

"It is a bad policy," she replied, "to have any one tint in a room too offensively prominent. It may be thought that artists are exceptions in this respect by enclosing their pictures in bright gold frames, but the reason that gold frames are used is that the painter, not knowing what other unsympathetic tint may be brought into juxtaposition with his picture, separates it utterly from any unfavorable companionship by the broad gold frame. It is a well known fact that pictures in a gallery kill each other by their juxtaposition, and to offset this as much as possible, gold frames are used. No artist can afford to have his picture ruined by a green or blue wall, and hence the isolation produced by the frame."

"People in furnishing buy their carpets and wall-paper with reference to some other object in the room, for they never think of buying their furnishings with reference to themselves. The people who dwell in a room are the most important objects therein, and rooms ought to be furnished to make everyone look well. Now a bedroom for a girl of fifteen should be dainty, light and tender in color, and the lady of the house ought to choose for a background in her parlor, or drawing-room, tints that will set off herself. If we were as generous to ourselves as we are to our doors and chairs, we would have much more agreeable interiors. Art is thought to consist in fans and ribbons and other nick-nacks, whereas all such nonentities should be cleared out of the apartment."

"Suppose," said I, "that the doors and trimmings of a room are in dark walnut, and that it is not desirable to paint that wood a lighter color, what would be your procedure in such a case?"

"Why, go in boldly for a dark room. Hang the walls with a tapestry paper. Have blue, and green, and red, and purple,

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in the pattern, all intermingled in various shades that would harmonize well with your dark walnut doors. It would be a mistake to put a paper on the walls having an ochery-yellow ground, with clear cut, raised dark sprays and foliage, as any light color would make, by contrast, the woodwork of the doors and windows too conspicuous."

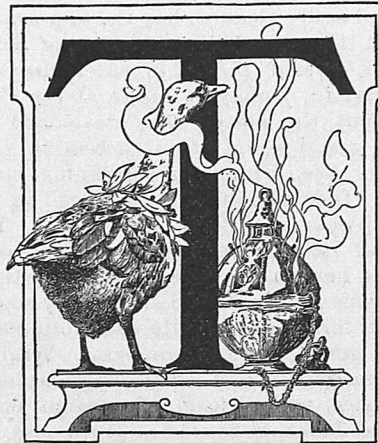
"Do you think America is advancing in decorative Art?"

"In America, more than any other country, civilization is making life physically enjoyable. We have more elevators, electric lights, telephones and various appliances for relieving physical exertion than in any other country. Consequently we have more time to cultivate the sense of sight. We have money to pay for good decoration if we haven't time to study it for ourselves. Decoration is taking hold of the people of leisure here as it has never done before. I see a wave of decorative art coming that in the next few years will make American homes the most beautiful, as they are now the most comfortable, in the world."

Mrs. Russell is thoroughly in earnest with her subject, and impresses her audiences with the conviction that she knows a great deal more than she is disposed to tell them at a single seance. There is nothing of the actress in her methods, no posing for effect. She possesses a gracious, magnetic personality, and every idea she enunciates is full of the common sense of

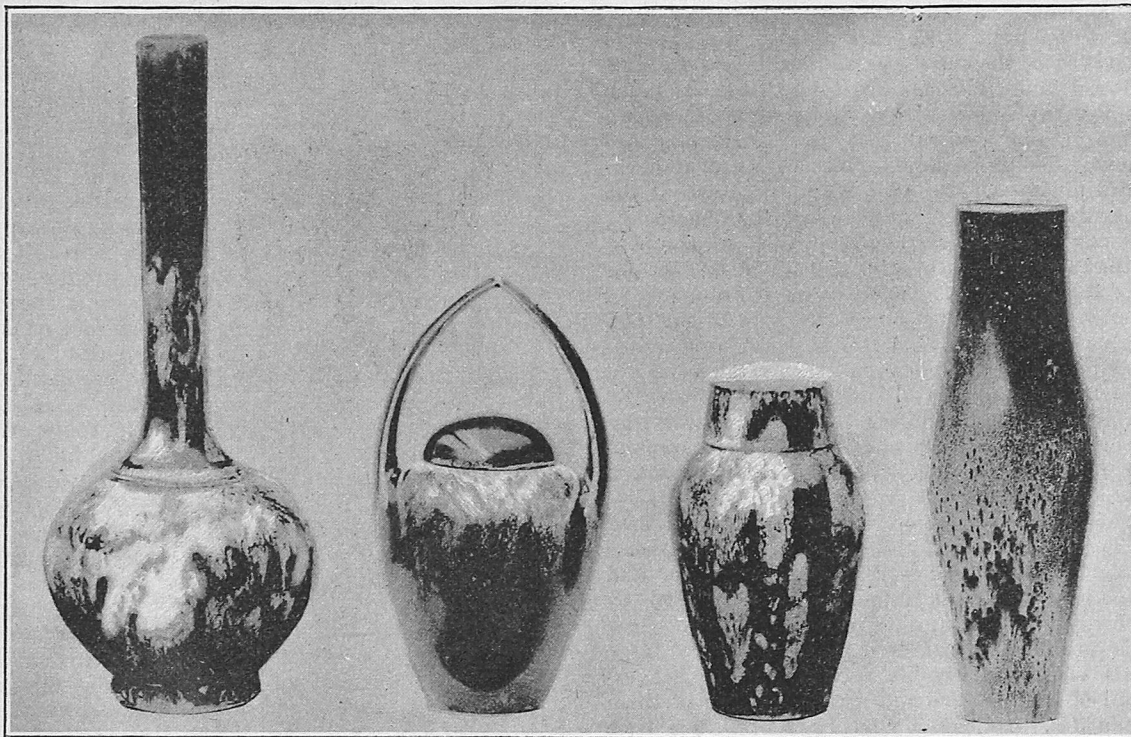
POTTERY AND GLASS AT COLLAMORE'S.

BY MAUDE HAYWOOD.



HE exhibit of David Collamore & Company at the Paris Exposition of 1889 was a real triumph to American industrial art. In a truly national spirit they limited their display to purely home products, in order, so to speak, to show Europeans what the New World is already capable of in this direction. They showed only Rockwood Pottery from Cincinnati and cut

glass by Hawkes of Corning, N. Y., carrying off for the former a gold medal, for the latter the Grand Prize, and attracting



VASES (FLAMBES) IN NEW PORCELAIN, MANUFACTURED BY M. M. HACHE, JULLIEN & CIE, VIERZON, FRANCE.

art. Her delivery is accompanied with an astonishing eloquence of gesture, the outcome not only of severe training, but also of an artistic grace of spirit, possessed but by few.

IT appears that the love for colors may be developed in two very different directions. It may simply become more intense in its own way, so that a man who took pleasure in red and blue at the age of twenty might take a keener pleasure in red and blue at thirty. Or it might happen that the man who had simply found pleasure in pure colors in early life might like intermediate tints at his maturity, in which case, though the refinement in his perceptions increased, his delight in pure colors would diminish. The general experience of cultivated painters is that they enjoy pure and bright colors less than they did when they were children. A colorist who had cultivated his gift assiduously for fifty years once marked to the present writer that the distinction between colors and color was never enough remembered either by painters or critics. Many painters have so far forgotten it as to imagine that the more colors they can put into a picture the better it will look. In the decade between 1850 and 1860 many pictures were executed on this principle, especially in England, and even at the present day it is not altogether abandoned. Such painting is really derived from illumination.

widespread attention by the beauty and artistic arrangement of their ware. To many on the other side of the water, this pottery, with its depths and richness of coloring, the fine quality of its glaze, and its highly decorative character, proved a complete revelation, the admiration in which it was held being testified to by the fact that the exhibit is now scattered all over the world, specimens having been purchased for the various museums and representative collections, some pieces being even bought by the Japanese government. Perhaps a yet higher compliment to the art value and originality of the pottery was paid by the directors of the different European ceramic establishments, in the studious interest they evinced in it, returning again and again, day after day, to examine and admire its technical qualities and characteristics. They realized by practical demonstration that America, to which nation, Europeans are not apt to grant much as far as art is concerned, might after all perhaps be in a position to teach them something, might possibly even prove no mean rival, especially considering how very recently this industry was established. It has barely existed ten years. In 1880 the Rockwood pottery was started at Cincinnati as a private enterprise by Mrs. Maria Longworth Storer whose father Joseph Longworth was the founder of the Art School and chief patron of the Art Museum in the same city. Mrs. Storer herself and all the decorators employed, with the exception of one native